



Viewpoints...Photos On Display

Whether they're informal snapshots from vacations and family gatherings or planned photographs from weddings and graduations, family photographs are probably the most personal and treasured of all home accessories. They come in all sizes, shapes and types, some in black and white and others in color. In addition new ones are added on a regular basis.

Since they give pleasure and bring back memories, get them out and enjoy them. They can be a challenge to display since they're so varied. Large framed pictures are often displayed by themselves while small ones are best in groups. Think about displaying them on a table or shelf, on the wall over a desk or in a family gallery down the length of a hallway. Simply select an overall theme for a grouping, such as weddings, grandchildren, photos taken of one individual over time or a special vacation, and then start experimenting with arrangement design.

Frames are plentiful and popular so you can find just the right one to go with a grouping or to show off a special snapshot. Many different stores sell frames or explore local auctions and attics for older frames that can be restored. These older frames are particularly attractive when paired with older photographs. Many pictures look better with mats. Purists usually prefer white mats with black and white prints and color mats with color. A mat emphasizes the image itself and provides a breathing space between the glass and picture to prevent them from sticking together. Once the photo adheres to the glass, the possibility of damage increases.

Sticking Problem?

If you have a photo that's stuck to the glass, immerse the glass and print in a pan of room-temperature water and keep testing until it pulls free. (Don't rush it!) Then let it air dry. Since most snapshots get a water bath during processing, there shouldn't be any damage, though this is not 100% guaranteed. Next time, use a cardboard mat around the picture to help hold it away from the glass and frame.

Here are some guidelines to consider when displaying family photos:

- Select one kind of framing for all pictures in a grouping, i.e., wood, lacquer, brass, silver, gold leaf. This creates a unified look to a number of images of different sizes, proportions and colors. Frame widths in a grouping may vary as well as the amount of ornamentation on the frames. Choose frames that complement the decor of the room: silver adds a touch of elegance, polished wood is a handsome accent in a study or office, and lacquered frames are well suited to a contemporary look.
- Limit the number of family groupings to one display per room.

- ❑ Avoid displaying pictures on a coffee table or other surface in the middle of the room since the backs will always be visible.
- ❑ Think tallest to smallest for table or shelf groupings. Place the largest ones at the back and the smallest in front. Photos, unlike many other collectibles, can sustain a little crowding.
- ❑ Mix black and white prints with color ones in informal arrangements, such as a casual grouping on a tabletop. There's a strong visual appeal, however, for keeping older black and white or sepia tone photos in one area and the more contemporary color photos in another.
- ❑ Display photos with books. They can coexist in a bookcase if you keep them well organized and on separate shelves. In a small, three or four shelf bookcase, arrange the books on the top and bottom with photos in the middle. In larger or wall-to-wall units, arrange alternating bays with books and photos for a clean, library-like look.
- ❑ Think creatively. Use an armoire as a family gallery with pictures arranged with the largest at the back. Some can be hung and others propped up. Prop a series of photos across a shelf or mantel ready to be changed on a whim.
- ❑ To preserve an old family photograph, have a copy of it made. Display the copy and keep the original stored in a safe place without extremes in temperature, humidity or light.

Picture tip

To preserve a framed snapshot, use an acid-free paper mat so that the glass doesn't touch it directly. Put it in a non-wood frame, and leave the backing unsealed to give the photo some ventilation.

FOCUS ON CARE ...

Make sure any cleaning you do does not harm the frame finish or the photo. Dust regularly to avoid a dirt build-up. A feather duster or soft-bristle brush will reach into crevices and corners of antique or ornate frames. Speed tip: For hard-to-reach nooks and crannies, blow air over them by squeezing an empty plastic bottle with a small nozzle—an old shampoo bottle, for example.

For hard-to-remove soil, wipe the frame surface with a slightly moistened cloth that has been dipped in warm water and mild liquid dishwashing detergent. Wring cloth well to avoid over-wetting the frame. Spot test shellac finishes and antique or ornate surfaces first before using any cleaning solution since some products can easily remove or damage a finish.

Caution: Never spray glass cleaner directly onto picture glass. It may hurt the frame or run between the glass and frame, damaging the picture. Instead, wipe glass carefully with a cloth moistened with a mild detergent and water solution. Wring well before using.

References:

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